

# MISSOURI. Conservationist

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# Deep Waters

The morning mist climbed to the brightening sky as the quiet movements of unseen creatures gave way to the voices of songbirds. The clear water continued downstream as day broke on the east fork of the Black River.

To celebrate the end of spring fire season, I often float with my sons or fellow foresters along this stretch of the Black River, from Lesterville to K Highway, not far from Annapolis. It is a good time to reconnect with one of Missouri's priceless rivers and streams.

You can travel to any part of this state and find unique and important water resources. We are also blessed to have

two of the nation's mightiest rivers, the Missouri and Mississippi, flowing within and traversing the state's boundaries. Last year's drought was a stark reminder that, while Missouri is rich in water, our state is not immune to the influences of natural events. It was a wake-up call for all of us to begin thinking about ways to protect and sustain Missouri's rich and vital waters.

Abundant, clean water has supported Missouri's residents, our economy, and our forest, fish, and wildlife for generations, with few limitations. In the past, water was not a limiting factor for economic development or public recreational use. However, the trend for development in Missouri is expected to continue, escalating the water demand for industrial, municipal, agricultural, and residential uses.

Today, many states struggle with legal and political processes for allocating precious water resources. Missouri is also susceptible to future water shortages and competing demands. Missourians only need to look to the west to observe how water allocation has evolved into a complex social, political, economic, environmental, and legal issue that will require leadership, collaboration, scientific expertise, sustained effort, and time to build consensus on how to best share a finite resource.

The Department has a responsibility to be involved in any effort to develop a water allocation process to ensure that Missouri's forest, fish, and wildlife are represented. The cornerstone



of the Department's approach to water management is to protect and promote stream flows of good water quality to sustain diverse plants and animals. We advocate an approach to first avoid, then minimize, and ultimately ensure appropriate mitigation for potential stream-flow regime alterations that would adversely affect the ecological integrity and/or biological productivity of

streams. The Department will engage stakeholders as we work to sustain Missouri's forest, fish, and wildlife resources through the ongoing debate concerning water issues. It will be important that interested parties engage in discussions early and often to chart the course for water use in Missouri.

Missouri's citizens have a rich and productive legacy of making difficult but appropriate choices when it comes to conservation. The dialog that leads to these decisions is often passionate. Recent discussions on regulations pertaining to crayfish, captive cervids, and deer management all point to how deeply Missourians care about nature. Discussions about allocation of water resources and its influence on forest, fish, and wildlife will be equally passionate and Missouri will be better served because of this dialog.

Spring gives me great hope that the tough weather conditions of last year are nothing more than a memory. Last year's drought is a powerful reminder of why the Department has long been involved in water issues. We will engage our partners in state water planning and other initiatives to ensure the conservation of our forest, fish, and wildlife for future generations. It is my hope that you find time to enjoy Missouri's rivers, lakes, and streams this spring.

Tom Draper, deputy director

## FEATURES

Cover: A colorful view of the Jacks Fork River near Mountain View, Mo., by Noppadol Paothong.

📷 17–40mm lens • f/9 • 1/125 sec • ISO 400

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*by Jake Hindman, photos by David Stonner*

Take a look at ol' Tom's playbook to help you notch your tag this spring.

16 **To Heaven and Back on the Upper Jacks Fork**

*by Brett Dufur*

Once described as the Mozart of rivers, the upper Jacks Fork is one of Missouri's wildest and most scenic rivers. It's a deep and narrow valley that offers spring paddlers a spirited float.

24 **Wounded Warrior Hunts**

*by Adam Bracken and Roger Wolken*

Two annual Missouri events honor our country's injured soldiers and help them heal through outdoor recreation.

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## WHAT IS IT?

Our photographers have been busy exploring the intricacies of the Missouri outdoors. See if you can guess this month's natural wonder. The answer is revealed on Page 7.



NOPPADOL PAOTHONG

## SELLING WALNUT TIMBER

In the February issue, on Page 21, the author states that "If you are fortunate enough to have several walnut trees on your property that have reached their economic and physiological maturity, then it's time to sell them." Selling and timing are choices. Just because a tree is harvestable, does not mean that the tree must be sold. I think the author misses the true point that conservation and beauty in Missouri lies in what we have, not just what can be put in one's pocket book.

*Dan Chapman, St Louis*

*Editors' note: We agree that selling and timing are choices for each landowner. For many people, the greatest value is found in leaving a tree standing. However, this article was intended as a resource for readers already interested in logging their timber.*

## OPENING DAY

On opening day, I fished all four trout parks and travelled 582 miles. I started in Cassville and ended at Salem.

My love of trout fishing began at the age of 9 when my dad took our family on vacation to Roaring River State Park. For 40-plus years I have continued that same trip, eventually taking my five kids and fishing the same hole, but this was my Grand Slam of trout fishing.

At 4:45 a.m., at Roaring River State Park, I checked in and headed for my hole. I soon had my first trout and the road trip was on.

I arrived around 10 a.m. at Bennett Spring. The rules had changed, but the goal was the same: one trout and move on. I put on my waders and slipped down into the cold water, chest deep. The snow was flying and the wind was blowing, but the other 20 or 30 fishermen didn't care either. Below the bridge I hooked into a beautiful rainbow. I headed for St. James. It was now almost 11:30, but no time for lunch.

Slightly after 1 p.m., I arrived at Maramec Spring. The river was up and I could not see a trout anywhere. I had come unprepared to fish muddy waters and the result was no fish. I enjoyed watching a group of children make a fool out of me as they successfully pulled another trout to the net. By 3 p.m. I knew I'd been beaten, and I headed for Montauk State Park.

As I arrived, I saw a gentleman throw a jig into the beautiful Current River. Then it happened—a lunker! I was as excited as if I had caught the thing myself. It was the biggest fish I'd ever seen. He weighed and measured it, took a picture, and then released it to fight another day. Wow! That's what it is all about.

I stepped into the water just a few feet upstream and caught fish number three. I'd done it! I had fished all four parks.

I will never forget this day or this road trip as long as I live. My son told me we are on for next year, and he reminded me that, though I missed the fourth fish, "It's not about catching fish, but making memories." I couldn't agree more.

*Ron Robinson, Van Buren*



## Reader Photo

## ALL-AMERICAN

Steven Looney of Thayer captured this image of an American toad. "Most people in the area hardly ever see me without a camera slung around my neck, shooting sports and events for the local newspaper," said Looney. "Or, out and about around the area, snapping pictures of the beautiful landscapes and the many points of interest here in Oregon County." The American toad is Missouri's most common toad. It breeds in late March, April, and early May. You can find out more about the American toad and other Missouri flora and fauna here: [mdc.mo.gov/node/73](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/73).

## HUNTING SHED ANTLERS

Thanks for the article *On the Hunt for Antler Sheds* in the January issue. I'm an avid bow hunter, so I see all sizes of antlered deer, most out of my range. I've always thought about hunting sheds, but wasn't sure when or where.

*James Farnell, Blue Eye*

## MYSTERY OWL

Close to 40 years ago, we were taking a winter walk when we were surprised by an owl flying directly toward us. We couldn't be sure what kind we had seen until now. It was on Page 13 of the February issue [*On Silent Wings*]. Thank you for the great article and superb photography.

*Ted and Sharon Meyer, Saint Charles*

## CORRECTION

In *Wetlands Reimagined* [March], the third paragraph on Page 12 makes reference to the "North American Wetland Management Plan." This should have been referred to as the "North American Waterfowl Management Plan."





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Kids' site: [XplorMo.org](http://XplorMo.org)  
Missouri Conservationist: [mdc.mo.gov/node/83](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/83)

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# HUNTING AND FISHING CALENDAR

## FISHING

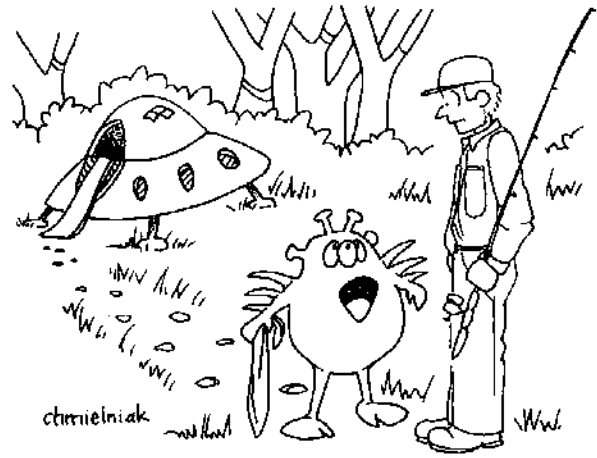
	OPEN	CLOSE
Black Bass from Ozark Streams	5/25/13	2/28/14
Paddlefish	3/15/13	4/30/13
Paddlefish on the Mississippi River	3/15/13	5/15/13
	9/15/13	12/15/13
Trout Parks	3/01/13	10/31/13
Nongame Fish Snagging	3/15/13	5/15/13

## HUNTING

	OPEN	CLOSE
Coyote	5/06/13	3/31/14
Deer		
Archery	9/15/13	11/15/13
	11/27/13	1/15/14
Firearms		
Urban	10/11/13	10/14/13
Early youth	11/02/13	11/03/13
November	11/16/13	11/26/13
Antlerless (open areas only)	11/27/13	12/08/13
Alternative Methods	12/21/13	12/31/13
Late Youth	1/04/14	1/05/14
Groundhog	5/06/13	12/15/13
Pheasants		
Youth (North Zone Only)	10/26/13	10/27/13
North Zone	11/01/13	1/15/14
Southeast Zone	12/01/13	12/12/13
Quail		
Youth	10/26/13	10/27/13
Regular	11/01/13	1/15/14
Rabbit	10/01/13	2/15/14
Squirrels	5/25/13	2/15/14
Turkey		
Archery	9/15/13	11/15/13
	11/27/13	1/15/14
Firearms		
Youth	4/06/13	4/07/13
Spring	4/15/13	5/05/13
Fall	10/01/13	10/31/13

Waterfowl please see the *Waterfowl Hunting Digest* or see [mdc.mo.gov/node/3830](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/3830)

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods, and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code* and the current summaries of *Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations* and *Missouri Fishing Regulations*, *The Spring Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information*, the *Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information*, the *Waterfowl Hunting Digest*, and the *Migratory Bird Hunting Digest*. For more information visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/130](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/130) or permit vendors.



"Take me to your Morels."

## Agent Notes

### Catfishing



ONE OF MY favorite things to do in late spring is to set lines for large catfish.

Abundant opportunity, liberal creel limits, and great table fare make catfish one of Missouri's most popular sport fish.

When setting trotlines, limb lines, or bank lines in public waters, there are several regulations that need to be followed:

- Anyone over the age of 15 must possess a valid fishing permit, except Missouri residents 65 years or older (some exemptions may apply, see the *Wildlife Code* for a full list).
- Each line must be labeled with the angler's full name and address or conservation number.
- Lines may not be left unattended for more than 24 hours or must be completely removed.
- No more than 33 hooks in the aggregate, for any or all methods, may be used by any person at one time, except in the Mississippi River where not more than 50 hooks in the aggregate may be used by any person at one time.
- Length and possession limits vary across the state. Make sure that you know the regulations for each species in the water you are fishing.

Try your hand at this popular method. Remember to follow the laws and be safe while enjoying Missouri's outdoors. Pick up a copy of *A Summary of Missouri Fishing Regulations* at your local permit vendor or visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/3104](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/3104).

*Matt Spurgeon is the conservation agent in Montgomery County. If you would like to contact the agent for your county, call your regional conservation office listed on Page 3.*

ASK  
THE

# Ombudsman



Female Ruby-Throated Hummingbird

## Q: When can we expect the hummingbirds to appear this spring?

A: An average arrival date for central Missouri is mid-April and late March is typical for our southernmost counties. The ruby-throated hummingbirds will become more numerous in May and decline somewhat by late May, when some of the birds will have moved further north to nest. There is an online website ([hummingbirds.net/map.html](http://hummingbirds.net/map.html)) that maps the annual migration, but I usually don't see the birds until a couple of weeks after the first arrivals are reported for my area on the map. Often I'll see my first hummingbird when my red buckeye tree and the native columbine plants are in bloom. That didn't work

last year, however, because the unusually early spring weather caused the plants to flower well before the birds arrived.

## Q: What is meant when someone says that a pond has turned over?

A: During much of the year, pond and lake water is stratified into different layers due to the differing densities of water at various temperatures. Seasonal air temperature influences the surface water temperature. Water is most dense, and therefore heaviest, at 39 degrees Fahrenheit. As it gets colder or warmer, it becomes less dense. Water at 32 degrees or lower (ice) is less dense than 39-de-

gree water, which is why ice floats and is formed at the surface. In the spring and the fall, the upper layers of water in ponds can approach 39 degrees while the deeper water is not that cold. Twice a year the cooler, heavier upper layers of water sink and mix with the warmer water below, resulting in turnover. Turnover is the relatively short-term, gentle, natural mixing of these layers of water. The color, taste, and smell of the water can change as decaying organic matter and trapped gases found in the lower depths become mixed throughout the water column. Most Missouri ponds and lakes turn over in the spring and again in the fall. For more information, visit: [go.usa.gov/gEbA](http://go.usa.gov/gEbA).

## Q: Why are we limited to three shotgun shells when hunting small game but rifles can have more than three bullets?

A: Shotguns are often used to harvest birds that can be present in flocks (waterfowl, doves) or coveys (quail). With a gun holding three or fewer shells, the hunter is more likely to be selective and make each shot count. Federal regulations require that shotguns be plugged for hunting most waterfowl and other migratory birds. With Missouri regulations, we have tried to keep the plugging requirement consistent for most species so that hunters are not frequently removing and reinserting plugs. That can easily lead to hunters receiving citations because they forgot to insert the plug for a particular species for which it is required.

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*Ombudsman Tim Smith will respond to your questions, suggestions or complaints concerning Department of Conservation programs. Write him at PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180, call him at 573-522-4115, ext. 3848, or email him at [Ombudsman@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:Ombudsman@mdc.mo.gov).*





## Be a Turkey Counter!

Would you like to help ensure the best possible management of Missouri's world-class wild-turkey flock? You can, by volunteering to help with the annual wild-turkey brood survey. Using survey cards, participants record turkey observations throughout the summer. The survey provides information that helps the Conservation Department track wild turkeys' nesting success.

Biologists use information from the survey to make decisions about hunting seasons and limits.

The only requirement to participate in the survey is that volunteers must be able to accurately identify wild turkeys as either hens, poults (young turkeys), or gobblers. To participate, send an email to [Martha.McCrary@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:Martha.McCrary@mdc.mo.gov). Write "Wild Turkey Brood Survey"

in the subject line, and include your name and mailing address. You can also send your name and address to: Wild Turkey Brood Survey, Missouri Department of Conservation, 3500 E. Gans Road, Columbia, MO 65201.

The Conservation Department will send you three observation cards to record your turkey sightings during June, July, and August. At the end of each month, simply drop the postage-paid card in the mail. The Department will take care of the rest. Participants who sign up after April 30 will not receive survey cards for all three months.

The Conservation Department has conducted the wild turkey brood survey since 1959, not long after turkey restoration efforts began. In addition to Conservation Department staff, thousands of dedicated citizen volunteers participate in the survey each year. If you enjoy watching wild turkeys during the summer months, please consider signing up to participate in the wild turkey brood survey. By doing so, you will help the Conservation Department manage one of the state's most cherished recreational and economic resources.

## New Nature Center Web Camera

The Conservation Department has a new way to help you discover nature online through the Runge Conservation Nature Center web camera. Common critters you may see on the camera are squirrels, birds, turkeys, and deer. To check it out, visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/21349](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/21349).

## How's the Fishing?

If you fish at Table Rock Lake, we need your help evaluating the effectiveness of efforts to improve the lake's fish habitat and fishing. From 2007 through 2012, the Conservation Department partnered with Bass Pro Shops, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to create more than 2,000 fish-attracting structures at Table Rock Lake. These took the form of submerged brush piles, rock structures, and stump fields. The structures were marked in various ways, including signs and published GPS coordinates.

The goal was to create places where fish would thrive and anglers could focus their fishing efforts. To see how well the structures are working, the Conservation Department is



asking anglers to complete a brief online survey at [surveymonkey.com/s/VLYYGM6](https://surveymonkey.com/s/VLYYGM6).

The survey asks about participants' fishing interests, how they use the fish-attracting structures, and how well they think the structures work. Anglers' answers will help the Conservation Department understand what kinds of structures work best, what is the best depth for different fish species, and answer other important questions.

The project is part of the National Fish Habitat Initiative. For more information, visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/16345](https://mdc.mo.gov/node/16345), and click on "Building Better Fishing."

## Apply Soon for TRIM Grants

The Conservation Department is offering grants to assist government agencies, public schools, and non-profit groups with the management, improvement, and conservation of trees and forests on public land.

The Tree Resource Improvement and Maintenance (TRIM) cost-share grants can help communities fund tree inventories, removal or pruning of hazardous trees, tree planting, and the training of volunteers and city or county employees to best care for community forests.

The program provides reimbursements of \$1,000 to \$10,000 to grant recipients to fund up to 60 percent of money needed for projects. Projects located in communities with The Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA designation are eligible for an additional 10 percent in matching funds. Proposals are assessed on a competitive basis for their value to the community, thoroughness as a tree-management program, the ability to promote, improve and develop a community's urban forest, and economic feasibility.

TRIM applicants must submit a completed application by June 1 that details project costs and funding sources, maps and drawings of the

project site, a three-year maintenance plan for the project, and a letter of approval from the governmental body owning the proposed project site.

The Conservation Department will hold TRIM grant workshops at the following sites:

- The Conservation Department's Southwest Regional Office at 2630 N. Mayfair Ave., Springfield, April 4, from 9 a.m. to noon. To register, contact MDC Urban Forester Cindy Garner at 417-895-6881 ext. 1632, or [Cindy.Garner@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:Cindy.Garner@mdc.mo.gov).
- Runge Conservation Nature Center, 330 Commerce Drive, Jefferson City, April 10, from 9:30 a.m. to noon. To register, contact Resource Forester Angela Belden at 573-592-1400 ext. 4, or [Angela.Belden@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:Angela.Belden@mdc.mo.gov).
- Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center, 11715 Cragwold Road, Kirkwood, May 1, at 6 p.m. To register, contact Urban Forester Mark Grueber at 314-301-1506, ext. 4210, or [Mark.Grueber@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:Mark.Grueber@mdc.mo.gov).



## WHAT IS IT?

### Columbine

*Aquilegia canadensis*

On Page 1 and left is the perennial columbine of woodlands found statewide, except in the southeast lowlands. It blooms from April through July and reaches about 2 feet tall. They grow on rock ledges, on rocky slopes in woods, in ravines, and on bluffs, often in shaded locations. Easy to propagate from its many seeds, this columbine is a long-lived garden plant that naturalizes and can even become weedy if you do not deadhead spent flowers. Flowers with such deep nectaries need pollinators with long tongues such as hummingbirds. Columbines begin blooming about the same time that hummingbirds migrate back to our state in spring. Other pollinators include butterflies and moths, particularly the hummingbird moth.—Noppadol Paothong

## Ameren Says WOW to Wildlife

The Conservation Department, in partnership with Ameren Missouri, has created a program to preserve and enhance wildlife habitat on land beneath Ameren's electric transmission lines. Called Wires Over Wildlife (WOW), the new program encourages property owners to manage land for wildlife habitat under transmission lines.

With project approval from Ameren Missouri right-of-way maintenance supervisors, Conservation Department staff provides technical

assistance, with Ameren cost-sharing with the participating property owners to reduce the costs of wildlife friendly management. Habitat work focuses on restoring natural wildlife communities and establishing vegetative cover that helps reduce under-line maintenance while increasing electric transmission reliability.

Conservation Department staff provides advice, and Ameren reimburses participating property owners to reduce costs of wildlife-friendly management. Habitat work focuses on restoring

natural wildlife communities.

Wires Over Wildlife is one of many ways MDC works with and for Missourians to sustain healthy forests, fish, and wildlife. This partnership with landowners adds valuable wildlife habitat on private land while reducing landowner costs.

Ameren Missouri also builds eagle nesting boxes, improves songbird habitat, installs swan diverters, and helps with a banding program for peregrine falcons.

Property owners whose land may be eligible for the program can contact the nearest Conservation Department office for more information. To find an office near you, visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/19935](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/19935).



## Share the Harvest Tops 3 Million Pounds

Missouri hunters passed the 3-million pound mark in charitable meat donations during the 2012-2013 hunting season. Hunters have been donating venison to food pantries and other charities through the Share the Harvest program since 1992.

Share the Harvest, started by the Columbia Area Archers and the St. Louis Longbeards Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation in 1992, grew rapidly after the Conservation Federation of Missouri and the Conservation Department adopted it. Now STH nets more than 200,000 pounds of venison yearly.

So far, Conservation Federation of Missouri has recorded Share the Harvest donations totaling more than 300,000 pounds from the 2012-2013 hunting season. That pushes all-time Share the Harvest donations over 3 million pounds.

Financial support from the Conservation Department and other sponsors help pay for processing whole deer donated to the program, making donations free for thousands of hunters. This year, hunters donated more than 6,000 whole deer. The result is lean, high-protein food for needy Missourians.

For more information, visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/2544](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/2544), or call 573-634-2322.

## Boaters: Beware of Hitchhikers

The spread of zebra mussels from the Great Lakes to Missouri waters could have profound consequences for Show-Me State anglers and boaters. They can damage boat motors and other marine equipment, clog water intakes, and smother native mussels. They also eat plankton, the same microscopic plants and animals that are the foundation of the food chain for bass, crappie, catfish, and other aquatic animals. Boaters have a critical role to play in preventing ecological damage by this invasive, exotic species. Visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/4681](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/4681) to learn how to avoid spreading these and other dangerous exotics.

## CFM Honors Conservationists

The Conservation Federation of Missouri honored 12 individuals and one organization for outstanding conservation achievements at its annual meeting, including two MDC employees.

Fisheries Division Chief Chris Vitello, Holts Summit, received the Conservation Federation of Missouri's Conservationist of the Year Award for his work on a host of conservation issues and his role in making Missouri a great place to fish through improvements in management of small-mouth bass, trout, and catfish and in fish habitat in Missouri lakes and streams.

Outreach and Education Chief Regina Knauer, Jefferson City, received the Conservation Educator of the Year Award for helping Missourians learn about nature in the roles of volunteer naturalist, education consultant, outdoor skills specialist, outdoor skills coordinator, education programs and curriculum supervisor, and leader of developing



## DID YOU KNOW?

*Conservation makes Missouri a great place to fish.*

### Helping You Discover Nature Through Fishing

» **1,410,735 trout stocked** by Conservation Department cold-water hatcheries in 2012. These fish were distributed in five trout parks, 12 stream special management areas, and Lake Taneycomo.

» **6,146,746 warm-water fish stocked** by Conservation Department hatcheries in 2012. Species stocked include hybrid striped bass, muskie, pallid sturgeon, paddlefish, largemouth bass, hybrid sunfish, channel catfish, and walleye.

» **Buy permits online for easy and immediate purchase, printing, and use**, visit [mdc.mo.gov/9258](http://mdc.mo.gov/9258). People can also buy permits from vendors, and by phone by calling toll free 1-800-392-4115.

» **Free Find MO Fish phone application** shows you a map of Missouri with the boat ramps to the major lakes, rivers, and streams. It also shows you the location of underwater fish structures that act as fish habitat the Conservation Department has established. With the geo-location feature, you can guide your boat to a fish attractor and start fishing. For more information and links to download the application, visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/15421](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/15421).

» **The Statewide Weekly Fishing report** is published from the first Thursday in April through September. The report gives general fishing conditions at selected lakes, rivers, and trout parks across Missouri. To receive a weekly email of the report, sign up at [mdc.mo.gov/fish/fishrt/](http://mdc.mo.gov/fish/fishrt/).

the Discover Nature Schools curriculum.

Also honored by the Conservation Federation of Missouri were:

- Bob Whitehead, St. Louis, Conservation Communicator of the Year
- Retired Conservation Department Forester John Fleming, Jefferson City, Forest Conservationist of the Year
- Vance Vanderwerken, Savannah, Wildlife Conservationist of the Year
- Dan Fuller, Pineville, Youth Conservationist of the Year
- State Senator Tom Dempsey, St. Charles, and State Representative Eric Burlison, Springfield, Conservation Legislators of the Year
- The late Allan Hoover, Pleasant Hill, Hunter Education Instructor of the Year
- George Sims, Mansfield, Water Conservationist of the Year
- Kelly Srigley-Werner, Columbia, Professional Conservationist of the Year
- Richard Fordyce, Bethany, Soil Conservationist of the Year
- The Association of Missouri Electric Cooperatives, Jefferson City, Conservation Organization of the Year

The Conservation Federation of Missouri is a citizen conservation group representing more than 93,000 individuals and 80 affiliate groups from hunters and anglers to birdwatchers. Anyone can nominate candidates for a Conservationist of the Year Award. For more information, call 573-634-2322 or visit [confedmo.org](http://confedmo.org).

### Dogwood Splendor Coming

Want to take a drive to enjoy the annual spectacle of Missouri's flowering trees? Try one of these routes:

- Highway 19 between Montgomery City and Thayer
- Highway 5 between Versailles and Gainesville
- Highway 142 between Doniphan and Bakersfield
- Highway 72 between Cape Girardeau and Rolla
- Highway 63 between Kingdom City and Thayer
- I-44 between Eureka and Rolla
- Highway 50 between Eureka and Jefferson City
- Highway 60 between Poplar Bluff and Springfield

Redbud trees blossom first, sending out rose-purple clusters as soon as late March. Dogwood blossoming normally peaks in mid-April near the

Arkansas border and two to three weeks later in northern counties.

### Duck Creek Gets a Facelift

Phase 1 of renovations at Duck Creek Conservation Area (CA) is complete. That is great news for hunters, birdwatchers, and wildlife photographers. It's also great for all ducks and other birds that depend on the areas to sustain them on their annual migrations. The two adjoining areas comprise half of southeast Missouri's remaining wetland habitat.

Both Duck Creek CA and Mingo National Wildlife Refuge are more than 60 years old. Many of the two areas' water-control structures were worn out or inefficient. The renovations will restore more natural wetland conditions and enhance the areas' wildlife habitat and recreational value.

Phase 1 began in 2010 and involved replacing worn out and damaged water-control structures and notching levees to restore the natural flood flow patterns. The changes also will provide flood relief for neighboring landowners.

This cooperative effort of the Conservation Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was funded with a grant from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. For more information, visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/8656](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/8656).



**Renovated Duck Creek Conservation Area**





Stay safe: consider wearing an orange hat or vest when moving during turkey hunting.



A scenic photograph of a forest edge. In the foreground, there is a field of tall, golden-brown grass. To the left, a dense line of green trees and shrubs borders the field. The background shows a bright, slightly hazy sky with some light clouds. The overall lighting is warm and natural, suggesting a sunny day.

# Gobbler GAME PLANS

Take a look at ol' Tom's playbook to help you notch your tag this spring.

*by* **JAKE HINDMAN** • *photos by* **DAVID STONNER**



**M**Y PARENTS MUST HAVE known I would be a turkey hunter. Besides naming me Jake (also the name of a juvenile male turkey), they encouraged my appreciation for all types of wildlife, including turkeys, from an early age. Growing up, it was always a treat to see what dad brought home from his hunting or fishing trips. Spring was the best, as there was always a story to go along with bagged gobblers. Those early exposures to turkey hunting taught me that different strategies were needed to consistently connect with longbeards.

Reflecting on countless turkey hunts and referencing my logbook entries of encounters, I created this guide to some of the most common gobbler maneuvers. Spoil Tom's plans this spring by employing a variety of tactics and strategies to help you bag your bird.

### Textbook Tom

**Situation:** It is 5:45 a.m. on opening morning of turkey season. You roosted a gobbler last night and you are now within 100 yards. He is gobbling from the roost. How do you call this turkey into gun range?

**Technique:** Start out with soft tree yelps to let the gobbler know you are there. If he answers

you a few times, wait for him to fly down and then let him know that you are on the ground and ready for business by cutting and yelping. Keep your firearm pointed in the direction of his gobbles. Listen for spitting and drumming as he approaches.

**Insight:** Missouri's regular spring turkey season opens on the third Monday in April. This conservative approach allows for the majority of hens to be bred before the season begins. In the case of the Textbook Tom, hunters can encounter gobblers with very few hens or no hens at all, making them very vulnerable to calling techniques.

### Gobbling Away Gobbler

**Situation:** It is 6:30 a.m. on the third morning of spring turkey season, and you hear a turkey gobbling in front of you. He gobbles every time you call, but he is farther away each time he gobbles. What strategies can be used to harvest this uncooperative bird?

**Technique:** Try aggressive calling by mixing in yelps and cutting. If your calling techniques fall short, try to determine what direction the gobbler is moving in and circle around in front of him. Use a locator call (crow, owl, or hawk work well) to "check" him and then use soft calls to lure him into range.

**Insight:** More than likely this tom has hens that are dragging him in a different direction. He is "courteous gobbling" to let you know that he is interested and he would like for you to come to him. Remember, in nature the gobbler is accustomed to the hens coming to him when he gobbles. This natural phenomenon often leaves hunters dealing with hung-up or hardheaded gobblers that refuse to come to calling.

### Too Many Hens Gobbler

**Situation:** It is 7 a.m. on opening day of youth turkey season and you just heard a gobbler about 200 yards away in a small clover field. You are able to get within 150 yards of the field and you can see there is one gobbler strutting with two jakes and four hens. How can you lure this small flock of turkeys in?

**Technique:** First, determine if the flock is moving in a specific direction and set up in front of them if possible. Start with soft yelps, clucks, and purrs. If that doesn't work, start

Scouting to determine the habits of the flock can pay big dividends.







aggressive calling to the hens and mimic exactly what they say. Calling over the dominant hen, or even cutting her off when calling, can make her come to check on the upstart hen and bring the entire flock in range. Use a variety of calls and calling devices to convince the flock there are several hens that are interested.

**Insight:** Hunters will often encounter gobblers with hens in small flocks in early season. If your calling attempts are unanswered, try hunting this bird on another day, or try setting up a ground blind in the area that the flock frequents. (*See Clockwork Gobbler on Page 15 for more information*).

### Yo-Yo Gobbler

**Situation:** It is 8:30 a.m. on the first Sunday of the season and you hear a turkey gobbling every few minutes. As you approach within 150 yards, it is apparent that the gobbler is strutting back and forth on a ridge. The bird appears to be gobbling at each end of his strut

### Successful Setups

1. Close the distance: Get as close as possible to the gobbler or a known turkey hangout location, 150 yards or closer depending on terrain and cover. As you ease to a setup use locator calls to keep tabs on the bird's location.
2. Plan ahead: Find a location before making any turkey calls in case the gobbler comes in quickly.
3. Avoid obstacles: Turkeys can sometimes be hesitant to cross obstacles. Avoid setting up with any barriers between you and the gobbler (creeks, old fences etc.).
4. Make it safe: Choose a tree that is wider than your shoulders and a spot where you can be seen by others. Wear blaze orange when moving.
5. Settle in: Get a good seat to ensure you remain comfortable. Pack food and drink.
6. Plan for the shot: Keep your gun up and pointed in the direction you expect the gobbler to approach. Positively identify a legal turkey that is within range of your equipment and ensure the shot is safe.

**Stake out a few decoys, make some soft calls every 15–20 minutes, and stay alert; don't be surprised if a gobbler shows up unannounced. Always keep safety in mind when turkey hunting. Attach a hunter orange banner or other item to the tree you're sitting against or your blind.**



**Spoil Tom's plans this spring by employing a variety of tactics and strategies to help you bag your bird.**

zone, which seems to be about 50 yards long. How do you deal with this type of turkey?

**Technique:** First, try getting as close to the turkey without spooking him as possible (wait for him to go to the other end of his strut zone to approach). Realize you will often bump this bird if you move too close too quickly and always keep safety a priority; wear blaze orange when moving. Once in position, try soft yelps, clucks, and purrs and imitate a coy hen that is simply feeding nearby. Scratch in the leaves to add realism. If the bird doesn't budge, consider going silent for a minimum of 30 minutes or try the bird later in the morning.

**Insight:** Gobblers will routinely strut in a strut zone to display, attract, and court hens. Many

### Spring Turkey Season Play-by-Play

**6 a.m.:** Fly down from roost

**7 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.:** Courtship/mating/feeding

**10 a.m. – 2 p.m.:** Loafing/egg laying

**2 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.:** Feeding

**7:30 p.m.:** Fly up to roost

times, they will retreat to a strut zone mid-morning, after hens have gone to lay eggs.

### Talkative Tom

**Situation:** It is 9 a.m. on opening morning and you have been working a tom for about 30 minutes now. He is gobbling at every sound you make but seems to be standing in the same spot. What strategies can you employ to harvest this bird?

**Technique:** Go silent; more times than not, if a gobbler thinks that the potential hen has left, he will come in silent to investigate. If the quiet treatment of at least 30 minutes has not worked, consider backing off and moving to a different location. Use a locator call to keep tabs on the bird as you ease to a different setup.

**Insight:** Often, gobblers will stand and gobble in the same spot, waiting for the hens to come to them. This is common turkey mating behavior. This bird will usually gobble incessantly after a few minutes of not hearing you respond; fight the urge to call back, playing on the psychological make-up of this bird. After applying the silent treatment, this bird will often walk in head held high, silent and cautious, looking for the hen.

### Kamikaze Gobbler

**Situation:** It is 10 a.m. on the first Friday of turkey season and a tom starts gobbling on his own. How can you ensure you will wrap a tag around this gobbler's leg?

**Technique:** Ease to within 150 yards of this gobbler or as close as possible without bumping the bird. Before you make any calls, make sure you have a found a solid setup location as this turkey will likely come in very quickly. (See *successful setups sidebar on Page 13 for more information*). Once you have your gun on your knee, start out with soft yelps and clucks. Be careful about moving, as this tom may be in front of you in only minutes.

**Insight:** This bird is what turkey hunting dreams are made of. More than likely this gobbler has had hens all morning, has lost them, and is simply trolling about looking for love. This tom will likely be so beside himself that he will come running into your setup. Expect spitting and drumming as he approaches.



## Clockwork Gobbler

**Situation:** It is the third day of Missouri's turkey season. You have watched a small flock of turkeys with one adult gobbler fly down in the middle of a 10-acre field each day and spend the majority of the day feeding and loafing. Your calling attempts have not worked. What techniques can be used to harvest this bird?

**Technique:** Try using a pop-up hunting blind. Put the blind in the general location that the gobbler has been landing, stake out a few turkey decoys, and settle in. Make sure to arrive well before first light. Try soft calling just to let the flock know you are interested in company.

**Insight:** Field birds with hens can be very difficult to call in. Scouting to determine the habits of the flock can pay big dividends when dealing with this type of turkey. If the gobbler doesn't come in immediately after fly-down, don't fret. Often, the hens will leave him later in the morning, leaving him lonely. Be prepared for the gobbler to return to your setup.

## Lock-Jaw Longbeard

**Situation:** It is the second week of spring turkey season, and you are attempting to harvest your second bird for the season. Thunderstorms from the night before have the woods quiet on this morning. Off in the distance you hear one gobble. The heavy foliage allows you to approach within 150 yards; the bird gobbles one more time on the roost before you hear him fly down. Your calls go unanswered. It is now 7 a.m. and you haven't heard the bird since 5:50 a.m. What to do?

**Technique:** Avoid over-calling on mornings that you hear little or no gobbling. In addition, avoid the temptation to walk the farm calling every 15 minutes hoping to hear a gobbler. Instead, rely on scouting trips prior to the season and return to known turkey hangouts. Stake out a few decoys, make some soft calls every 15–20 minutes, and stay alert; don't be surprised if a gobbler shows up unannounced.

**Insight:** Weather can have a huge impact on the mood of turkeys, which can also impact the amount of gobbling that turkeys will do during weather-change events. During slow or undesirable conditions, respond with conservative tactics to increase your chance of success.

## Turkey Timeline

**January to February:** Brood flocks are well established and gobblers are seen in small flocks

**Mid- to late March:** Flocks break up

**Mid-March:** Gobbling begins, 1st peak in early April

**Mid-April to late May:** Gobbling continues, 2nd peak in mid-April

**April to May:** Courtship/mating

**Late April to late May:** Hens nesting

**Early June to late August:** Broods appear

**Mid-June to September:** Brood flocks form

.....  
*Don't see a gobbler that you have dealt with? Email me at [jake.hindman@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:jake.hindman@mdc.mo.gov) and let me know the type of turkey you have encountered and what strategies you used.*

## Gobbler Fraternity

**Situation:** It is the last day of Missouri's spring turkey season and you have spotted three adult gobblers on the edge of a wheat field about 250 yards away. How do you call this late-season bachelor group into gun range?

**Technique:** After determining what direction the turkeys are going, try to circle around in front of the trio and find a spot along their potential travel route. Start out with soft yelps and, if possible, watch the reaction of the gobblers to your calling.

**Insight:** Though the breeding season is winding down, gobblers can still have a high interest in connecting with a hen. Rely on the terrain to remain unseen while sneaking to a set-up location. Consider putting out a lone hen decoy to entice the late-season longbeards.

Although turkeys will be turkeys, and not all techniques will leave you with a filled tag, hunters will have a much higher chance of connecting with spring gobblers by trying a variety of turkey hunting techniques. This spring, when you set up on a love-crazed longbeard, analyze the situation and apply a mixture of tactics; by doing so you'll likely fill your tag shortly after Tom's toes touch dirt on opening day. Calling in and harvesting a spring tom will have a lasting impression, and each new experience will help you become a better hunter. ▲

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*Jake Hindman, outdoor education center supervisor at Jay Henges Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center in High Ridge, enjoys matching wits with gobblers every spring.*









# TO HEAVEN AND BACK ON THE *Upper Jacks Fork*

The forecast calls for thunderstorms and heavy rains, but we go anyway. Our trip really starts to come together once we agree to have no plan. We are prepared for anything, except for what Mother Nature serves up—sunshine, gently overcast skies, and a light breeze. We are blessed with two perfect days on the river, and we leave with a lifelong desire to return. *by* **BRETT DUFUR**



**ONCE DESCRIBED AS THE MOZART OF RIVERS,** the upper Jacks Fork is one of Missouri's wildest and most scenic rivers. It's a deep and narrow valley that offers spring paddlers a spirited float. Conservation Department photographer Dave Stonner and I embark on a leisurely two-day canoe float from the Buck Hollow Access, north-east of Mountain View, to Bay Creek, a distance of 18 miles. The river is low, so we pack light.

### A Paddler's Paradise

The shallow water is moving fast now. The 30-foot wide stream has narrowed into a frothing riffle only 6 feet wide. I'm using every paddle trick I know to keep my canoe in the center of the current, as it swiftly pulls me toward a tall bank of imposing rock.

The clear water is liquid light, and I'm scant inches above the gravel bottom, which is zipping by in magnified detail. I duck as a low-hanging sycamore branch tries to snatch my river hat. Around the bend, a deep emerald-tinged pool provides pause. I'm smiling ear to ear and I finally remember to breathe.

The tight canyon walls continue on in a perfect paddler's playground: long green pools where sunfish are suspended motionless, and then the familiar tightening of the bend, some quick

paddling action, and then a chance to drift once again, cast the fly rod, and take it all in.

A paddler's paradise? An Ozark nirvana? For me, it's heaven. Raised on the Big Muddy, I am dumbfounded by this clear stream. I am mesmerized to see every detail of the riverbed below. A small school of longnose gar moves in unison. I see turtles ambling along the gravel streambed 5 feet *below* my boat. I'm afloat atop a looking glass into a heretofore-unseen world.

The river and its streamside habitat is home to many birds. Our quiet approach puts us closer to these birds than either of us had ever been, including numerous great blue herons, and smaller greens, fishing from brush piles and branches that reach over shallow waters. The silence is seasoned with the sweet melodies of numerous pileated woodpeckers and the slate-blue belted kingfisher.

The distinctive call of the northern parula dominates the forest — a buzzy zip that slides up the scale. Many species of songbirds are returning from a winter down south. The newly arrived songbirds are vocal, intent on finding mates and establishing breeding territories. We spot pairs of wood ducks feeding in slower moving pools behind eddy lines, the males resplendent in their breeding plumage.

Paddling the crystal-clear waters of the Jacks Fork, we catch rare glimpses of underwater life, including schools of fish and turtles ambling along the gravel streambed 5 feet *below* our boat.



DAVID STONNER





Butterflies abound around every bend. Clouds of small white and yellow sulphurs erupt from shallow puddles only to quickly regroup. They are busy wicking up, or “puddling,” the minerals found there. The larger zebra swallowtails, with their flashes of blood red and distinctive patterns, flutter about along gravel bars throughout the float.

## The Heart of Wilderness

I’ve paddled many rivers that were easy to describe, easy to define. The character of the up-

per Jacks is elusive. It is a river of extremes, a river of contradictions. This is a true wilderness float, with both calm Class I reaches and wild-but-mild, white-water-capped Class II rollercoasters. It paddles like a river that’s dropping down the western slope of Colorado. It’s steeper, faster, tighter, smaller, and clearer than most river runs in Missouri.

The Jacks Fork is a tributary of the Current River. Together, these two rivers are the centerpiece of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, America’s first designated national park area for a wild river stream system. Managed by the National Park Service, the Jacks Fork and the Current River make up one of the longest protected, free-flowing waterways in the United States.

Soon we pass Blue Spring, which emerges from a cave at the base of a cliff a couple miles below Buck Hollow. It provides an average of 3 million gallons of water per day to the Jacks Fork. Its deep blue pool is located just inside the cave mouth and the spring feeds an excellent swimming hole.

**As we enter the Jacks Fork Natural Area, we stop to explore a little-known natural archway hidden from view (above) and seep-sodden dolomite bluffs rich in plant life, such as the maidenhair fern (left).**





Dave photographs the towering entrance to Jam Up Cave (above), and spring's fleeting blooms, including the Jack-in-the-pulpit (right).



## Jacks Fork Natural Area

About 4.5 miles into the float, we enter the Jacks Fork Natural Area. The Jacks Fork flows for about three miles through this designated natural area, recognized for its unique biodiversity, which includes more than 450 native plant species.

This natural area is also unique because it is accessible only by canoe. The current turns south. I'm vibrating with excitement as my finger follows the topo lines on my map. Near the south end of the west-facing slope is the little-known Jacks Fork Natural Arch. Obscured behind dense tree cover, it is easy to float right past — and most do.

We stop, scramble across a wide dry gravel bar, and find the arch just a few hundred feet up the steep forested hillside, completely unseen from the river. Exploring the unusual formation left us with more questions than answers. Finding it was one of many highlights of this float.

After photographing the natural arch's play on shadows and light, we continue to float past the forested banks of spring that have yet



to close in behind a leafy veil. Bright blooms of dogwoods and serviceberries highlight the deep forest view. Bursts of wildflowers appear at every turn. There is a certain tenacity of spirit that pervades these fern-covered, seep-sodden dolomite bluffs.

One finds layers and layers of plant life amid this geologic jambalaya. Here are the retina-burning five-spoked fire pinks, familiar bluebells, columbine perched in the most precarious of places on the rock faces, and pale yellow limber honeysuckle. Down closer to the river's edge: patches of phlox, diminutive purple and smooth white violets, yellow rockets, jack-in-the-pulpits, trillium, spiderwort, and a sea of ferns—walking, maidenhair, and many others.

In some spots are rare plants — holdovers from the Pleistocene era — from a time when fir forests and a much colder climate dominated Missouri, some 12,000 years ago during the last Ice Age. These glacial relicts, like the harebell and false bugbane, survive in remnant populations on cooler north-facing areas. Some of them occur nowhere else in the state.

About 6 miles into the float, we reach Jam Up Cave — one of the most spectacular cave entrances in the state. We scramble up a talus slope trail of dolomite boulders to its entrance and crane our necks to take in the view. Above me towers the cathedral-sized archway of Jam Up Cave, 80 feet high and 100 feet wide. How can elements as simple as rock, water, and time conspire to create such grandeur? It is a para-

dox of nature to see such a testament of time framed by spring's ephemeral blooms.

This place, and the entire history of the Jacks Fork River, has been written one drop of water at a time — a slow cadence of H<sub>2</sub>O, patience, and resolve. Over eons, these unassuming, tiny droplets shaped everything about this place: the path of the meandering river, the deep holes, the ripples, the dolomite bluffs, and the many caves and springs along the way.

Caves, springs, losing streams, and sinkholes permeate the karst topography. The Jacks Fork watershed, a land area of 445 square miles in portions of Howell, Shannon, and Texas counties, drains directly into the Current River. Approximately 20 percent of the watershed is in public ownership, most of which is managed by the Conservation Department.

### Fish, Float, Explore, Repeat

The Conservation Department works for Missourians, and with Missourians, to improve the water quality and aquatic resources here. For years, the Department has worked with private landowners to develop best management practices to reduce streambank erosion and to improve forest management. Healthy uplands and woodlands benefit the river and all of the life in it. Citizens play an important role in keeping the river healthy, too. The Upper Jacks Fork River Rats, Stream Team 713, monitors water quality and has removed countless tons of trash from this stretch.



Paddles long forgotten, we fish countless emerald-tinged pools for smallmouth bass.



## Fly Fishing for Smallmouth Bass

There are some great smallmouth fisheries in North America. However, I think most fly fishers are unaware that some of the best smallmouth fly fishing is found in the Missouri Ozarks. It is a place of swift streams, cool, clear waters, and rocky bottoms — ideal habitat for the smallmouth bass. Toss in the scenic beauty of the Jacks Fork with its grand dolomite bluffs and it becomes an inspiring place to fly fish.

Smallmouths are pound-for-pound one of the best fighting freshwater fish to be caught on a fly rod. On average these fish weigh between 1 and 3 pounds and can exceed 5 pounds in the Jacks Fork. When a 15-inch smallmouth takes your crayfish pattern bouncing along the stream bottom, a memory is created. Initially you imagine there is a 10-pound monster on the end of your line. The struggle between line and fish gets anxious. Will the line hold this maniacal thrashing of fish flesh? Finally you bring the fish close to the surface and realize it isn't 4 feet long. It's 15 inches of power and fury.

Top water flies are an extremely exciting way to fish for smallmouth. The strikes are explosive. The excitement that comes from a top water strike will put your adrenal glands into high gear. Some of the best top water flies are trout flies like Humpies, grasshoppers, and small poppers in black and chartreuse. Many times a smallmouth will swim under a fly and wait for the first sight of movement and strike. Always be prepared for a take. You never know when the explosion will occur.

When fishing subsurface flies it is hard to beat a Clouser Minnow or Woolly Buggers in sizes 4 to 6 with a gold bead or cone head. A smallmouth favorite is a weighted crayfish pattern fished along the bottom.

Enjoy the environs of this bronze-backed tough guy and remember, a smallmouth bass is too fine of a fish to catch only once. Practice catch and release.

— by Mark Van Patten, Conservation Department streams coordination biologist

Conservation Department fisheries biologists study the waterway habitat and strive to improve it for a wide variety of aquatic species. The river teems with 67 species of fish, including popular sport fishes like smallmouth bass, goggle-eye, suckers, longear sunfish, largemouth, and chain pickerel. Forty of this river's fish species are native, and six are found nowhere else outside the Ozarks: Ozark madtoms, checkered madtoms, Ozark shiners, Current River saddled darters, Ozark chubs, and Ozark sculpins.

Dave and I look forward to reeling in a show-stopping smallmouth, since this section of the upper Jacks Fork is designated a smallmouth bass special management area by the Conservation Department. Spring smallmouth bass fishing is catch-and-release only, since there is a no-harvest season from March 1st through late May. In season, there is an 18-inch minimum length limit on smallmouth bass, and anglers are allowed to harvest only one per day.

Casting above numerous riffles and teasing the flies over deep pools is immensely satisfying. One could not ask for a more beautiful setting to cast a line and wait for a miracle. The male smallmouths should be on their spawning beds defending their nests by now through the end of May, but I can't let logic disrupt a perfect cast. Stubbornness runs deep in my family, and a big bass is a tantalizing promise.

The bright sun falling on my shoulders, the enveloping bluffs, the saturated greens of spring, and the soothing sounds of flowing water tune out the world, and make for bliss-filled hours fishing. No bites. No regrets. I guess that's why they call it fishing and not catching.

## The Power of Wild Places

The upper Jacks Fork reminds you of the power of wild places. It is a jewel of an intact natural system. The Ozark National Scenic Riverways will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year. It continues to preserve the most biologically and geologically diverse float streams in Missouri. The Jacks Fork and Current rivers were the first in the nation to be federally protected, and their watershed is an area of global biological significance.

Here on the upper Jacks Fork, wilderness reigns supreme. Gone are the typical float stimuli of overpasses, roads, power lines, countless





gravel bar camps, and the drone from outboard motors. As humankind continues to reshape much of the state, the importance of these remaining wild places will increase.

After a leisurely second day fly fishing and floating, we reach our takeout at Bay Creek late in the afternoon. A local outfitter has shuttled our truck down to the takeout, which makes loading up for the long trip home a simple process.

Now all packed up, I walk around my truck checking the tie downs on my canoe one last time. The sound of the Jacks Fork rushing over

shallow rocks is heavy in my ears. I enjoy one long last look as it disappears around the next willow-covered gravel bar. On it flows. And it is already pulling me back.

Departures are often accompanied by epiphanies. Watching the river meander out of sight, I realize I have been to heaven and back on the upper Jacks Fork. I know there is life after the Jacks, but for me, there is no longer life without it. ▲

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*Brett Dufur is a writer and editor for the Missouri Department of Conservation. He lives in Rocheport.*

**The view from atop Jam Up Bluff shows one of the river's tightest bends. The immense gravel bar located just downriver from Jam Up Cave is a popular primitive camping site.**

## Float the Upper Jacks Fork

The upper Jacks Fork can be floated in either a long day, or as a leisurely two-day float.

Consider a weekday float to experience less congestion on the river.

Floating the upper Jacks Fork is rain-dependent, but the river is floatable from Alley Spring down year-round.

Numerous outfitters offer canoe rental and shuttle services that can greatly simplify your trip. Contact information and a Jacks Fork map can be found on the Missouri Canoe and Floaters Association website at [missouricanoe.org](http://missouricanoe.org).

Learn more about the Jacks Fork Natural Area and download a map at [mdc.mo.gov/node/2426](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/2426).

Check the Jacks Fork river level and local weather forecasts at [go.usa.gov/234k](http://go.usa.gov/234k). Look for 2 feet or more on the local gage to float the upper Jacks Fork River.

The Ozark National Scenic Riverways provides trip-planning information at [nps.gov/ozar/](http://nps.gov/ozar/) or call 573-323-4236.

Get involved with the Upper Jacks Fork River Rats, Stream Team 713, by calling 417-932-4363 or send an email to [tednpat@gotrain.org](mailto:tednpat@gotrain.org).





A disabled veteran participated in the Wounded Warrior Deer Hunt in Jasper County. A special blind in a golf cart allowed him to use his wheelchair while hunting.



# WOUNDED WARRIOR HUNTS

by ADAM BRACKEN  
and ROGER WOLKEN



Two annual Missouri events honor our country's injured soldiers and help them heal through outdoor recreation.

**E**IGHT SOLDIERS FROM FIVE STATES (Iowa, Missouri, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia) met near Nashville, Mo., for a special mission: four days of hard-earned outdoor recreation therapy at Peterson Outdoors Ministries' 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Wounded Warrior Deer Hunt. They would spend opening weekend of the firearms deer season hunting private property, thanks to local landowners.

The participants spent the first day getting to know one another and firing and sighting in their guns. Soldiers were given backpacks full of gifts, mostly hunting items donated by sponsoring companies, and hunter orange vests that had been embroidered with their names.

It was a good first day for the soldiers, but not their first experience with the Peterson Ministries' staff. The organization had begun contacting the families and preparing for their visit months prior. The organization's goal is to minister to the needs of the soldiers and their families before, during, and after the event itself.

"It is great to get wounded warriors or individuals with disabilities into the outdoors, but if it stops there, then it falls far too short," says Tron Peterson, founder of Peterson Outdoors Ministries, a nonprofit organization that offers outdoor recreational therapy to wounded warriors, as well as to children and adults with dis-

abilities or terminal illnesses, at no cost.

Programs are designed for the soldier's whole family because spouses and children of wounded warriors also deserve support, healing opportunities and a fun adventure.

## Day 2: Team Building

The season opened with a great first morning for the soldiers. Dustin Morrison, of New Market, Iowa, scored a great buck and several others also had deer down. Everyone was treated to a talk by Chuck McAlister, founder and host of the hunting program *AdventureBound Outdoors*.

The hunting groups are an important factor in the organization's process and success. "We team our hunters with a professional guide and videographer," explains Tron. "These teams are picked not on their hunting ability or excellence in filming, but because of their character and willingness to make a difference, encourage each other, and help the soldier with his struggles."

Participants are encouraged to use their time outdoors to reflect. "Each morning, before the hunt starts, we have a speaker share a message of hope and encouragement for the soldiers to reflect on while in the hunting blind," says Tron. "Each evening, we have a speaker give a message to the entire group of soldiers, their families, and volunteers."



### Day 3: Honors and Special Guests

Nick Jedlicka, of Council Bluffs, Iowa, had an opportunity to hunt a great property and took a handsome nine-point buck.

That evening the soldiers were encouraged to share a little about themselves and where they had served. Their humbleness was overwhelming. No matter how long they had served, how many tours they had done, or how severe their injuries, none of them considered themselves to be heroes. To them it was just part of the job.

### Day 4: Big Bucks, Big Finish

The soldiers greeted their last day with a morning hunt.

Conservation Department staff set up the evening's event. They prepared a meal of venison kabobs, fried catfish, venison chili, and sides for about 250–275 people, including the soldiers, volunteers, and members of the community. Some of the funding for the event was provided by the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation. To learn more, visit [missouriconservationheritagefoundation.org](http://missouriconservationheritagefoundation.org).

Alex Rutledge, host of the TV show *Bloodline*

with Alex Rutledge, had hunted that morning with Robert Duke, of St. Robert, Mo., and he gave a talk to close the event. It was a night of good food, pride, and patriotism.

The hunters took a total of 11 deer. Most of the deer were donated by the hunters to the Share the Harvest program.

These events are always met with excitement and appreciation by the participants. However, it is their ability to help individuals and families heal that really make them special.

"We have seen more than 70 lives changed for the better at our events, families and marriages restored, hope and purpose restored in the life of the soldier and his family. This is what it is all about," says Tron. "Also, several of our wounded warriors have returned to their home states and started programs to help other wounded warriors."

### Behind the Scenes

It takes a great deal of funding, labor, material, and moral support to offer these programs. Planning begins months in advance. Luckily, community members, business leaders, and

Individuals and community organizations work together to provide veterans' meals during the Wounded Warrior events.



DAVID STONNER



other organizations have been extremely generous and supportive of their returning heroes.

Many volunteers participated daily during the event as well as before and afterward. In addition, 50–60 volunteers worked at least 10 hours on three of the event's four days.

"We receive support from both local and national companies, churches, and faith-based groups as well as the community," says Tron. "We have over 150 volunteers who we train to help with these events. These volunteers and businesses recognize that we are free because of the sacrifices these service men and women have made and want to give back in this way."

### Get Involved

If you are a wounded warrior, or if you have a disability or terminal illness, and you would like to be included in a hunt, contact Peterson Outdoors Ministries at [petersonoutdoors.org](http://petersonoutdoors.org), by email at [tron@petersonoutdoors.org](mailto:tron@petersonoutdoors.org), or by phone at 417-529-0115. Volunteer opportunities are also available.

### Missouri-Kansas Ducks N'Bucks

In November 2012, the Wounded Warriors in Action Foundation and the Conservation Department cosponsored the annual Missouri-Kansas Ducks N' Bucks event held near St. Joseph, Mo.

Eight Purple Heart recipients traveled to northwest Missouri for a four-day guided hunt, multiple banquets, and an evening event including dinner and honors at the Conservation Department's regional office in St. Joseph, made possible by funding through the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation.

Community involvement was remarkable. "We had a super group of volunteers that helped out during the event," says Brian Roderick, Missouri-Kansas Ducks N' Bucks chapter president. "Thirty-five wonderful volunteers had boots on the ground, helping transport, guide, cook and more."

The Wounded Warriors in Action Foundation is a national nonprofit organization. They are dedicated to serving our nation's combat wounded by providing world-class outdoor sporting activities as a means to recognize and honor their sacrifice, encourage independence and connections with communities, and pro-

### Permit Exemptions for Veterans

**Any member of the U.S. military currently assigned as a patient to a Warrior Transition Brigade, Warrior Transition Unit, or a military medical center** may hunt (but not trap) wildlife—except deer and turkey—without a permit but must carry orders showing assignment to a Warrior Transition Brigade, Warrior Transition Unit, or admissions verification to a military medical center. However, additional permits are required for migratory birds. **Note:** Nonresident veterans who meet these requirements also can purchase resident permits, for example, resident deer or turkey hunting permits.

**Any honorably discharged resident or nonresident veteran having a service-related disability of 60 percent or greater, or who was a prisoner of war during military service,** may hunt (but not trap) wildlife—except deer or turkey—without a permit but must carry a certified statement of eligibility from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

For more information on military permit exemptions, visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/9202](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/9202), review the *Wildlife Code of Missouri*: 3 CSR 10-5.205: Permits Required: Exceptions (available from permit vendors and online through the Secretary of State's website at [sos.mo.gov](http://sos.mo.gov)), or call our Department headquarters at 573-751-4115 and ask to speak with someone in our Permit Services office.

mote healing and wellness through camaraderie and a shared passion for the outdoors. You can learn more about them and how to get involved at [wwiaf.org](http://wwiaf.org) or by calling 1-888-308-9942.

"I see a crucial need for mental and spiritual healing in the combat-wounded veteran population, and I've seen how sporting activities in the great outdoors can meet this need," says founder John McDaniel, who is also a veteran.

"In my career, this was one of the most humbling and gratifying events I have ever had an opportunity to be a part of," says Roger Wolken, Conservation Department northwest regional protection supervisor. "I was touched by the gratitude each of the veterans expressed to us. We are so blessed to be U.S. citizens, to live and work in the profession we dearly love, to raise our children in a free country, all of which is due to the veterans of our armed forces and their personal dedication and sacrifices." ▲

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*Adam Bracken is a conservation agent stationed in Jasper County. Roger Wolken is the protection regional supervisor for the Northwest Region with headquarters in St. Joseph.*



## Events for Families

*Attend one of our many free events around the state to reconnect with nature and spend time with family.*

THE CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT invites you to discover nature with a series of outdoor preparedness classes in Columbia. There will be a classroom session 6 to 8 p.m. on April 11 at the MDC Central Regional Office. Additional field dates will occur from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. on May 1 and May 22. This program is open to families and youth age 11 years and up with a parent or adult mentor.

The series of classes will cover basic outdoor skills such as how to build a campfire, finding wild edible foods in the woods, how to purify water, how to build a shelter and much more. Whether a person wants to be more prepared when venturing outdoors on a nature hike, or to learn new skills to use on a hunting or camping trip, this series of classes will prepare you for your next outdoor adventure.

“Outdoor preparedness begins with the right mental attitude and then builds upon several key skills,” said Conservation Department Outdoor Skills Specialist Brian Flowers. “With a backpack containing several key items, outdoor enthusiasts can feel better prepared to take on most outdoor emergency situations.”

To register, or for more information, contact Flowers at *Brian.Flowers@mdc.mo.gov* or 573-815-7901, ext. 3388.

The E. Sydney Stephens Central Regional Office and Conservation Research Center is conveniently located off of US Highway 63 just west of the Discovery Parkway exit on the south side of East Gans Road. —*Joanie Straub*

### Other Events Around the State

For more information about these and other Discover Nature programs, visit *mdc.mo.gov/events*.

- » **Springfield: Spring Wildflower Hike at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center, April 17 from 1 to 2:30 p.m.** Take a stroll with us on the trails for a close look at spring wildflowers. Ages 7 and up. Registration is required and begins April 2, call 417-888-4237.
- » **Blue Springs: Owl Prowl at Burr Oak Woods Nature Center, April 20 from 7:30 to 9 p.m.** Bring your family to learn about owls and discover the important role they play. We will dissect real owl pellets and search for these nocturnal predators. We will learn how to identify Missouri owls by sound. Ages 7 and up. Registration is required and begins April 2, call 816-228-3766.
- » **Cape Girardeau: Spring Bird Walk at Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center, April 20 from 9 to 10:30 a.m.** Spring is a great time to view and listen to songbirds. While some nest in this area, others are migrating through to areas much further north. Join expert birders along the nature center trails as they help find and identify these magnificent birds. Ages 5 and up. Registration is required and begins April 2, call 573-290-5218.
- » **North St. Louis County: Full Moon Wetland Walk at Columbia Bottom Conservation Area, April 26 from 7 to 9 p.m.** Take an evening walk and discover nature through the sights and sounds abounding in the wetland. Dress for the weather and wear shoes that can get muddy. We may walk up to 3 miles. Meet at the visitor center to car pool to the hike site. Ages 10 and up. Registration is required and begins April 12, call 314-877-6014.









## Bird's-Foot Violet

*Look for this small, lavender beauty as you walk Missouri's woods and glades this spring.*

IT HAS BEEN more than 20 years since my friend and mentor, Mark Haas, encouraged me to think like a naturalist when traipsing through Missouri's forests and prairies. I had just started a new job as a fisheries biologist with MDC, and I soon learned that Mark, my supervisor, had more in store for me than just fisheries training. Mark encouraged me to tote a copy of *Missouri Wildflowers* on my turkey scouting trips, so I could learn every wildflower I saw along the way. He also suggested that I write in the book the time and place of each discovery. It seemed odd to me at the time that Mark, who was an ardent angler and hunter, could be so passionate about wildflowers. I soon learned that Mark's love for nature extended beyond wildflowers to birds, trees, and mammals. Mark was not only a formally trained biologist but also a born naturalist, and his innate desire to share his wisdom would be my good fortune for years to come.

Recently I was perusing my old notes in the wildflower book I'd carried through the woods during those early years. I noticed that one of my first entries was for a bird's-foot violet (*Viola pedata*). The bird's-foot violet, with velvety petals of purple and lavender, is one of Missouri's most iconic spring wildflowers along with the likes of spring beauty and rue anemone. Stumbling across a patch of bird's-foot violets in early April can evoke the same emotions that arise from the sound of a field sparrow's melody, confirmation that winter has succumbed to the renewal of spring.

Diminutive in size, bird's-foot violet consists of five petals spanning about an inch across. The plant's leaves remind some of a bird's foot, hence the name. Coming in two color forms, the flower may be all lavender, or three petals of lavender and two of rich purple with a velvety texture. Occurring nearly statewide, bird's-foot violet is commonly found in open woods and glades. It can also be spotted along roadsides along with many other spring wildflowers. I captured this image of the two-colored form, which is sometimes called "hens and roosters," on a ridge along the Bourbuese River in Franklin County.

Bird's-foot violets provide many benefits beyond their colorful contribution to the forest floor. They not only produce nectar for pollinators, but also serve as host plants on which the larvae of certain butterflies, especially fritillaries, can feed after hatching. As with other wildflowers, bird's-foot violets produce seeds that are consumed by birds, mice, and other critters, and the flowers themselves are a tasty treat for rabbits.

Mark is now retired, but we continue to stay in regular contact, sharing stories about turkeys, songbirds, ducks, and wildflowers. I continue to seek his guidance on Missouri's flora and fauna.

The *Missouri Wildflowers* field guide is \$14 (plus shipping and handling). You can order a copy at [mdcnatureshop.com](http://mdcnatureshop.com) or by calling 877-521-8632. You may also purchase one at a conservation nature center or regional office near you (see Page 3).

—Story and photo by Danny Brown

 200mm lens • f/5 • 1/30 sec • ISO 200

*We help people discover nature through our online field guide.  
Visit [mdc.mo.gov/node/73](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/73) to learn more about Missouri's plants and animals.*









## Birdsong Conservation Area

*The sights and sounds of this area in Saint Clair County put birds, fish, forests, and other wildlife on display.*

BRING BINOCULARS AND field guides to explore this Kansas City region conservation area, where you're sure to see and hear plenty of Missouri birds and wildlife. Birdsong Conservation Area (CA), which occupies 430 acres in Saint Clair County, offers a diverse abundance of wildlife habitat.

Consisting mostly of forest and woodland, Birdsong CA also includes scattered portions of oak savannas and woodlands with expanses of dolomite glade on the thin bluffs along Brush Creek. A 125-acre savanna unit containing glades, woodlands, and fields dominates the area's southeastern portion.

Brush Creek, which flows through the west-central section of Birdsong CA, supports such high-quality habitat and diverse species that 26 acres surrounding the creek have been designated as Brush Creek Natural Area (NA). Forty-one fish species have been recorded in the natural area; fishes such as large golden redhorses, longear sunfish, northern hog suckers, Ozark minnows, bleeding shiners, striped fantails, and rainbow darters can be admired by snorkeling, a common pastime at Brush Creek NA.

Three fish species of conservation concern have been documented at Brush Creek NA. The brook lamprey, blacknose shiner, and Niangua darter benefit from the stable stream habitat maintained by the Conservation Department. This part of Brush Creek is listed as critical habitat for the federally endangered Niangua darter, although its population in the creek appears sparse, as the species has gone undetected here for nearly two decades. The importance of Brush Creek NA for species like these is that it allows their essential habitats to develop.



16–35mm lens • f/3.5 • 1/50 sec • ISO 400

Brush Creek offers fishing opportunities for bass and sunfish, while Birdsong CA presents hunting prospects for deer, turkey, and small game. Access trails allow visitors to explore the area on foot while viewing birds and wildlife.

Area managers maintain Birdsong CA's natural attributes using various techniques. Efforts to restore native grassland are underway and include tree removal and prescribed burning. Additionally, managers have planted several acres of riparian forest buffers to accompany those already present along Brush Creek. Ten percent of crops on the area are left standing in the fields to provide food for wildlife.

Birdsong CA is located west of Collins and can be reached by traveling 2.5 miles south on Route J from Highway 54. For more information, visit the website listed below.

—Rebecca Maples, photo by David Stonner



**Recreation opportunities:** Bird watching, fishing, hiking, hunting in season, primitive camping, wildlife viewing

**Unique features:** This area features diverse habitat types, including forest, woodland, savanna, glades, and fields, and contains a natural area supporting three fish species of conservation concern.

**For More Information** Call 660-885-6981 or visit [mdc.mo.gov/a8043](http://mdc.mo.gov/a8043).



# Kids in Nature

Look for spring wildflowers. Find two different flowers and compare the flower petals. Draw a picture of each flower.



Simple Ideas  
for Family Fun

Go on a spring picnic to enjoy the warmer air and the growing plants.

## Oriole birds

arrive in Missouri the week of April 22. See if you can spot one.



Take a walk and find a tree that has buds.



Look for **flowering dogwood** trees.

Take the No MOre Trash! litter pledge. "I promise to do my part to make and keep Missouri litter free. I promise to keep my house, my yard, and my town clean and free of trash. I will throw my trash away and pick up trash when I see it. I will tell my family and friends about No MOre Trash!"

## Kids in Nature Photo Contest!

Break out those cameras and send us your best images of you and your family enjoying the outdoors for our new photo contest. Once again, we will be accepting entries via the online photo sharing service, Flickr. If you are not a member of Flickr, it is easy and free to join. Once you are a member, just navigate to our kids in nature group page: [www.flickr.com/groups/mdc-kids-in-nature](http://www.flickr.com/groups/mdc-kids-in-nature) and submit your photos. MDC staff will select a winner every month and display at [mdc.mo.gov/node/20869](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/20869). All of the monthly winners will appear in the January 2014 issue of the magazine.

**Build a bird's nest. Gather about 300 twigs and pieces of dead grass. Weave them together to form a bowl about as wide and deep as your hand. Then, find a puddle and gather mud to cement the whole thing together.**







Subscribe online • [mdc.mo.gov/node/9087](http://mdc.mo.gov/node/9087) • Free to Missouri households



## I Am Conservation

Jeff Meshach is the director of the World Bird Sanctuary in Valley Park. "If we are to save wild spaces and wildlife, we must change people's minds," says Meshach. "Just telling our audiences to recycle, become aware, and become involved with conservation won't make the difference. If you can grab their attention with something spectacular and natural, something they could only see from great distances in the wild, you have a way better chance of changing a person's mind in the direction of conservation. I believe this great organization and the beautiful birds I work for change people's minds." The Sanctuary reaches 250,000 to 500,000 people annually with its conservation message. Jeff's passion for wildlife started at an early age with his father and grandfather taking him hunting and fishing. Myriah, the Golden Eagle perched on Jeff's glove, was hatched in 1971 and became part of the "staff" in 1988. She has helped educate millions of people in her life. — *Photo by David Stonner*